

File No. 9110498

WORLD TRADE CENTER TASK FORCE INTERVIEW

CAPTAIN BRUCE LINDAHL

Interview Date: January 25, 2002

Transcribed by Laurie A. Collins

CHIEF CONGIUSTA: Today's date is January 25th, 2002. The time is 1330 hours. This is Battalion Chief Frank Congiusta of the New York City Fire Department. I'm conducting an interview with the following individual.

Please state your name.

CAPTAIN LINDAHL: Captain Bruce Lindahl.

CHIEF CONGIUSTA: Captain Lindahl is assigned to Engine 221 of the New York City Fire Department. We are at the quarters of Engine 221. This interview is regarding the events of September 11th, 2001.

Q. Bruce, if in your own words you would state what happened that day.

A. We responded from quarters on a fifth alarm for the fire in the south tower, the second tower to be hit. On our response we were told that the Brooklyn Bridge was open, dedicated to Fire Department response. We responded over the Brooklyn Bridge.

Coming over the Brooklyn Bridge, we went around City Hall to Broadway. We were

responding down Broadway. We stopped the pumper at Broadway and Dey Street. At that time there was a radio message for units responding on that particular fifth alarm to report in to a staging area in front of the World Financial Center.

We left the pumper with extra masks, extra Scott bottles, and we began to make our way around to the staging area, which was on the other side of the World Trade Center complex on West Street.

When we got out to Church Street, we made a right turn and we headed towards Vesey Street. We then made a left and started to walk towards Vesey. We crossed the street and went along the buildings in front of number Seven World Trade Center and those buildings across the street.

I saw airplane parts, and people were jumping out the windows of the Trade Center. I didn't want any of the members to get injured from falling plane parts or, God forbid, somebody jumping out the windows. So we stayed along the side of the buildings there.

I remember instructing the members to

form a single file line behind me and if any debris was coming in their direction to run forward into a doorway to seek shelter.

We got out onto West Street, and we went to the World Financial Center, where we reported in to Chief Cassano. I told Chief Cassano what we had been assigned to the World Trade Center fire. He told me to stand fast at the staging area.

We were at the staging area only a short period of time when he called Engine 221 along with, as I remember, at least two other engine companies, and we were told to go across the street to the south tower and report in to the command post in the lobby of that building.

We picked up our equipment and were beginning to go across West Street when the south tower began to collapse. We turned around. I motioned and instructed the members of the company to head towards which I believe at this time to have been a parking garage. It was large double bay doors underneath the World Financial Center.

We went into that tunnel entrance and

down into the bottom of the tunnel entrance. At that time a number of other companies were evacuating the same way with us, but we weren't sure how to get out of that basement area.

There was a worker from the building. I believe he was from building maintenance. I asked him if he knew which way the exit was, if there was an exit out of here. He instructed us towards a doorway, to a stairway. We went through the doorway into a hallway that led to a stairway. It was probably about five to six units were evacuating in that direction.

I had stayed at the doorway that led into this hallway from the parking garage entrance to direct all the firemen into that stairway. As I went back into the stairway, I hollered up, "Was everybody okay?" They told me that the exit door was locked.

I asked the man who worked for the building if he had a key. None of the fireman had any forcible entry tools. They had left them all at the staging area or dropped them on their way. I asked this gentleman if he had a key, and he said to me he thought he did. I remarked to

him that I certainly hoped he did.

I left him with a lieutenant. I told the lieutenant to take him up to the exit door and to begin evacuating the firemen out of the stairway.

I went back out into the parking garage entrance to make sure that there were no other firemen left out there and that everybody was going to be able to evacuate.

When I came back inside, the firemen up in the doorway told me we couldn't get out that exit, that it wasn't a safe way to go out. I went up the stairs to that exit door and told the assembled firemen there to wait, that I would check it out and see if it was safe.

We thought we were still in the building. Visibility was practically zero from all the dust, debris, dust. I thought we were still in the building. I didn't realize that we were outside. When I went out maybe about 30 or 40 feet, I realized I was outside the building, I wasn't inside, and that this appeared to be a safe way to exit, based on the World Financial Center.

So we went out. I went back to the stairway. I told the fire personnel there to evacuate and get as far away from this building as they could. They all did that. I grabbed the last two firemen that were leaving, and I asked them to remain with me.

We went down to the bottom of the stairs, out into the parking garage, and I left them there. I tied off a search rope, went back out onto West Street. I saw Chief Cassano. I told Chief Cassano that we evacuated about five to six units out the rear through this parking garage tunnel and that they were behind the building. He acknowledged my report. I told him I was assembling the members and I was going to return with them. Chief Cassano told me, "Fine."

I took the search rope, and I tied it off at the entrance the parking garage entrance. I tied it off on a metal stanchion. I told Chief Cassano that if he followed the search rope that it would lead him to the stairway and to the building exit and it was a safe way to get out of there. He acknowledged that also.

I left to go to the back. I was going

to assemble the members in the back of the building, bring them back for a rescue effort. A lot of the members didn't have their gear. They had left their protective equipment at the staging area.

At this time I had of my company there, and I told them that we're going to have to go down and get some helmets and turnout coats to outfit these guys that had evacuated the staging area without their equipment.

We went back down the stairs. I left two men in the stairway, and I took probationary Fireman McSweeney with me out to the staging area to gather up whatever helmets and turnout coats we could for use of the firemen.

I didn't see anyone at this time. We gathered a number of helmets and turnout coats, and then we went back out to the rear of the World Financial Center. We distributed the equipment to the firemen that needed it.

Again, we were going to form up a rescue team and go back out to the front and hopefully meet Chief Cassano perform whatever we could to either support the firefighting or the



rescue effort that was undoubtedly going to be taking place.

As we were going to make our way back -- we hadn't entered the World Financial Center from the rear yet. The second tower collapsed, and everybody evacuated the whole area. We ran to I'll describe it as an esplanade area along the Hudson River some distance from the rear of the World Financial Center. Most of the guys who were with us dispersed. I was able to keep the guys from 221 with me.

At that point in time, I do remember getting directions to evacuate I think it was north of Church Street on West Street, and that's what I instructed the members to do. That's where we took some R&R.

After being at that location for a short period of time, I had the members of 221 assemble together. We decided to make our way back to the collapse area, the location of our pumper, meet up with the MVO of 221 and see what we could do.

We did make our way back to the location of the pumper on Dey Street between

Broadway and Church Street, but we couldn't find our chauffeur. The scene was still pretty chaotic. There was no organized command or anyone in charge at that particular time. What was left of the two towers were burning freely.

I don't remember if we took it upon ourselves or if amongst the company officers that were there if we got direction from a chief officer, I don't recall at the time. But we realized we had to put water on what was left of the Trade Center and what was burning.

We set up a water relay. There was no water on Church Street, and we had to get water from the other side of Broadway. So I set up a water relay from the other side of Broadway with our pumper, and we took over the pumper of Squad 41. That pumper was unmanned, but it was operational.

We set up a water relay from our pumper down Dey Street to 41's pumper. We had poor water pressure, so we took a line off a standpipe system, and we started up the fire pumper on one of the nearby buildings. That augmented our relay into the pumper of Squad 41.

Q. I never would have thought of that.

A. Yeah.

Q. I'm impressed.

A. Thank you.

So we got sufficient water. 119 Truck positioned their tower ladder on Church Street, and we were able to get a line into 119's tower and they began to operate on the fire.

There was still a lot of confusion. People were telling us to abandon that position. We thought what was left of the tower was going to collapse. I don't know. I just felt that there might be some people around and we just weren't going to be very successful. We weren't successful as it was. We weren't going to be successful letting this thing free burn.

So we were able to get water into 119's tower. We started to operate on the north tower. Then things were starting to get together, and we took some hand lines from Squad 41's pumper, which we were operating, and helped support the rescue effort on the pile. I guess there eventually was a rescue effort that began, a search operation.

I pretty much stayed, supervised the water relay and the operation of the two pumpers. My personnel, including myself, I didn't think that we were mentally or physically able to really get too involved in whatever rescue efforts were taking place, or search operations.

At this time it's late in the afternoon, coming into the early evening. We continued to operate those two pumpers until 6:00 the next morning, at which time I went to the command post at Broadway where it comes around into Park Row, I think it was, right where the park comes in, City Hall Park. At one point there was a command post there.

I asked for relief and told the chief in charge how long we had been there, and he said by all means he'd have a company come down and relieve us. This was about 6:00 in the morning.

One thing I didn't mention, we had thought the MVO, Warren Monroe -- at first I thought he had just evacuated. Then I thought he was possibly killed, looking at the devastation. 252's pumper on the second unit was obliterated. They were at the end of Dey Street near Church

Street. I thought possibly Fireman Monroe may have also been killed. He may have been at that location and possibly was killed.

At about 1:00 in the morning, I got word that Warren Monroe was alive. That was at 2:08. Warren Monroe was in fact alive. We were quite relieved, all the rest of the members. We were pretty happy that Warren was alive.

Like I said, we were relieved at 6:00, and we returned to quarters. That's it.

Q. That's it? Anything else?

A. No.

CHIEF CONGIUSTA: The time is 1345 hours, and this concludes this interview.